1: Herskovits & Herskovits E-5 (1928-1929) 1934
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Granman's chair, and the Granman sent the dark flame of his eyes into all the corners of the house to verify the bassia's statement that all were there. The krutu was about to begin. 623

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Discussion among the Bush Negroes is the close companion of authority, and both are symbolized in the word *krutu*. Krutu is at once court and parliament, and whether it was that two Bush Negroes wished to discuss the proffered price for a carved paddle, or whether the Granman and his elders met to assess a penalty against a recalcitrant village, the term applied was the same—krutu. [646]

We had had no little experience ourselves with krutu by the time we reached Asindopo Lantiwe. When our paddlers came to us again and again to suggest added fees for the journey upstream, they came to krutu with us. When at Gankwe it had been decided that Sedefo and his three companions might go with us, it was a krutu, and at Pa'aba when the men "went to one side" and decided we were not to be brought to the village where men whose spirits were strong danced Kromanti, it was again krutu. There were, too, the innumerable krutu in the villages on the way when we asked to buy carvings or obias or fish traps.

Now when the question was being decided formally whether we would be permitted to stay here on the upper river, it was again a krutu.

To understand what was implied in the term, how the Bush Negro himself regarded it, what the etiquette surrounding it was, and how it was integrated into the life of these people, it was necessary to range far and wide over this bush civilization. At the core of this word we found two ideas. One was the necessity of direction. "When the boat lacks a steersman, it sleeps quietly," these people say of a village whose chief is dead. Direction, authority was their legacy from Africa. Their ancestors had known the rule of dynasties, and the power of men who reigned. CA1

But there was also the idea of the importance of free discussion, the need to weld authority and the will of those

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641 over whom it was exercised. When the ancestors of the
[569] Bush Negroes were brought to New World slavery, what measure of acquiescence they showed was due to the fact that slavery was not an unfamiliar tradition to them. They knew of the war captive, or the man convicted of a serious crime, who was a slave to one of their own kind. But the experience of the white man's slavery was a crucible in which the ownership of man by man, and the unquestioning obedience which men owed to those of higher rank, were destroyed, leaving only the ideal of the life of free men. "Free!" was the way in which one Bush Negro toasted
[203] another, or a white man, when he drank with him. A "*Man*
621 *Nengere*," an adult Negro was, above all, a free man, and it was as a freeman that he was governed, for though villages had chiefs, and there were bassias who were subordinate to chiefs, and though above the village chiefs were clan chiefs, and over them all the Granman, yet the final word rested with the members of each subsidiary body, and not with its leader.

624 Every village had its officials, and its medium for discus-
682 sions. Every clan had its head, and its old men, who,
[614] sounding out the will of the clan members, consulted with that head when questions were to be decided. For the decisions affecting the entire Saramacca River, there were
[643] the Granman and his krutu, before whom questions of
[692] larger policy or disputes between villages were brought.

Perhaps most impressive of all was the measure of auton-
639 omy which each village had. A village, or certainly a group
614 of neighboring villages belonging to the same clan, formed
609 a small kingdom. A Bush Negro of another village who came to visit, came as any stranger, paddle in hand, his top cloth covering his loin cloth. When he found himself in a strange village on a night when a dance was being given, he did not join the dancers until after much urging by a native of that village, and then he danced little, and if he were a particularly fine dancer, he took care not to flaunt his superior gifts. The exception to this, to be sure, were the sacred dances, when a stranger, whose god came

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577 671 641 The morality of the Refugee Blacks knows in effect only obligations of a social and religious order. As for everything concerning material life, each one has the absolute right, one could even say the duty, to act as he sees fit, insofar as he does not wrong anyone else.

643 671 64 [756] If the grand man gave an order obliging someone to act against his own interest, for example if he wished to lower arbitrarily the price of boats, this order would be lawfully void. If the grand man has very great personal influence, he can persuade the Boni that it is to their interest to obey such a prescription, but in no case can his command have the effect of imposing by force an arbitrary order foreign to the social and religious tradition; the present grand man is weak in character to boot, sensitive to the influence of the Creoles and very little given to exerting any authority.

643 771 In reality, the office of grand man is above all religious. The grand man centralizes, if one may say so, the struggle against evil forces and watches ceaselessly over the welfare of the collectivity.

643 764 When a man dies, his near relatives come to report on the questioning of the yɔrka. Burial cannot take place until the grand man has made sure that all the prescriptions have been filled. People come to report to him again after the burial so that he can be sure that no suprahuman danger remains.

643 775 [782] The grand man has special power over the yɔrka (spirits) of the dead, which the beliefs of the Refugee Blacks place on a level intermediate between the human and the divine. When one of these yɔrka exerts against a lineage a vengeance (kunu) whose malignity goes beyond habitual bounds, the grand man beseeches it to stop; they allege that things go back to normal, at least for a time.

This power attributed to the grand man invests him, in the eyes of the Boni, with a suprahuman character. It is the very foundation of his political power.

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692 693 [641] An essential principle of the social life of the Refugee Blacks is that every citizen carries the law within himself. If several men are requested to arbitrate a private quarrel, it is said that they form a lïnti kuutu. But they can hand down only a sentence of conciliation. Only the general assembly convoked by the grand man has the power to impose its decision.

692 795 The ordinary role of the lïnti kuutu is to judge the dead, to make sure that they were not wisimï (sorcerers), to proceed to their interrogation in order to give the force of law to the answers, especially in what concerns inheritance.

692 693 795 The lïnti kuutu meets when a death is announced; the first to arrive go to the grand man who designates two of the captains to preside over the council this time (for all the members are equal). In fact, rare are the councils attended by all the men present in the villages. Most of the time the lïnti kuutu groups only about 30 men, mostly old men.

692 The lïnti kuutu meets very rarely to judge a living man. That has happened only three times between 1948 and 1957.

692 687 In 1948 the grand man convoked the lïnti kuutu to judge a man who, duly called as boatman to take him to Saint-Laurent, had not come. He was sentenced to make a pallisade around the grand man's habitation, which took more than a month of work. /75/

692 685 In 1953 the council met to judge Loko (Dju), who had made himself guilty of aggravated theft (simulated shipwreck to the detriment of a Benzdorp trader and resale of the merchandise), for which he had been condemned by French justice to several months in prison. Loko had to make honorable amends in the presence of the assembled members of his lineage, then he was sentenced to make 50 planks for the benefit of the grand man.

[224] [643] In August, 1957, the council met to judge Pototo (Asisi-Dju), 23 years old, and Amusupé (Asisi-Aw.B.), 70 years old, who were guilty of a grave offense: misappropriation of a tapir (malpouri) killed by a Djuka who, feeling gratitude toward the grand man, had made known his intention to offer him part of the meat.

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794 [181] The laws of Odun. The cult of Odun (Odū) is the keystone of the social and religious structure of the Refugee Blacks. It is a very secret cult; its rites are not practiced in the presence of outsiders and all curiosity about it meets with frank hostility. [123] The Boni, who talk rather freely about the cults of possession, are mute on the subject of Odun, and one may spend years among them without even hearing this name uttered.

794 184 The worship of Odun is common to the Boni and the Saramaka (perhaps this is what explains the trustful relations which exist between the two groupings). Among the Djuka it is replaced by the worship of Gwangwēla (Grantata), which has exactly the same functions and rites.

796 Odun is not to be confused with the creator God Nana (Masa Gadu). The myths explaining the relationship of these two entities were not known by our informants, but it is clear that Odun was sent to men by Masa Gadu as legislator and judge.

671 Odun's laws have a profound originality, as much by their content as by the sanctions which accompany them. It is not excessive to speak of a religious and moral doctrine of the Refugee Blacks.

[641] These laws appear in negative form. A certain number of acts and behavior are forbidden to those who have entered the society of the Refugee Blacks by taking an oath which binds them for good and all. 784 Offenders will be punished without the direct intervention of men, by the all-powerful action of Odun, who will kill them or /196/ strike them down with sicknesses. As a general rule, Odun's punishment is death; this is what explains the fear his name inspires.

673 [754] Odun forbids:

--Sorcery, wisi, in the most general sense, that is, any magic action having as its purpose the killing, making ill, and in a general way doing harm to another person.

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[673] [794] [629] --Vengeance; if someone believes himself to be the victim of witchcraft, he must under no circumstances engage in counterwitchcraft or invoke his ancestors against his enemy. He may ask only for the protection of the Pikia. It is Odun who [784] will avenge him by sooner or later killing the evil-doer.

[583] --Violence in any form whatever. It is regarded as a particularly serious offense against the laws of Odun to strike with an armed hand and to make human blood flow (1).

[684] 1. That explains the strictness with which the society of the Refugee Blacks limits the right of punishment granted to the wronged husband, who must strike only with bare fists in front of witnesses, never in the bush nor on the river. Fear of seeing [826] [952] human blood flow explains the reticence of the Boni toward minor surgical operations.

[641] [586] --Any attack on personal liberty by material or moral coercion; in particular, neither a man nor woman may be constrained to remain in a marriage which has ceased to please him; nobody may be forced to reside here or there.

[832] The forms of magic so popular among West Indians, aimed at capturing a person's love, are for this reason rejected by the Refugee Blacks and considered as a form of wisi.

[769] --Any évocation of the spirits of the dead, even to ask [754] them for protection, other than in the public ceremonies provided for by custom. Thus nobody must go to the cemetery to pray alone on his parents' grave. Whoever would do that would immediately be considered as wisimã.